

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
AND DECISION RECORD
FOR**

The Hoyt Restoration Project

Environmental Assessment
DOI-BLM-NV-C010-2010-09-EA

INTRODUCTION

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Carson City District, Stillwater Field Office, has conducted an environmental assessment (EA), DOI-BLM-NV-C010-2010-09-EA, to evaluate the environmental impacts for an integrated restoration management strategy to restore and protect the native vegetation on up to 3,820 acres within the Hoyt wildfire area. This area most recently burned in August 2009. The project area is located north of Edwards Creek Valley and east of Shoshone Pass, in Churchill County, Nevada. The project is part of a nationwide initiative to restore and maintain the health of the land within fire-prone areas.

The environmental analysis, DOI-BLM-NV-C010-2010-09-EA, evaluates the impacts on the natural and human environment that could result from implementing this project. The EA considered two alternatives: The Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative.

PLAN CONFORMANCE AND CONSISTENCY

The Proposed Action described in DOI-BLM-NV-C010-2010-09-EA is in conformance with the Carson City Field Office Consolidated Resource Management Plan (CRMP May 2001):

- LSG-1.1 Maintain or improve the condition of the public rangelands to enhance productivity for all rangeland and watershed values.
- LSG-1A Maintain a sufficient quality and diversity of habitat and forage for livestock, wildlife, and wild horses through natural regeneration and/or vegetation manipulation.
- FIR-2.1 Restore fire as an integral part of the ecosystem, improve the diversity of vegetation and to reduce fire hazard fuels.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT DETERMINATION

Based on the analysis of the Hoyt Restoration Project Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-NV-C010-2010-09-EA, I have determined that the action will not have a significant effect on the human environment and an environmental impact statement (EIS) will not be prepared. This finding is based on the context and intensity of the project as described:

Context:

The Proposed Action is to implement a restoration strategy on 3,820 acres that will include a chemical treatment to control the annual weed (cheatgrass) invasion and a reseeding effort to both reestablish the native vegetation and create a green strip fuel break along the east side of the project boundary. This project is on public lands managed by the Carson City District, Stillwater Field Office.

Intensity:

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulation includes the following ten considerations for evaluating intensity:

1) *Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.*

None of the environmental effects discussed in detail in the EA are considered significant, nor do the effects exceed any known threshold of significance, either beneficial or adverse.

2) *The degree to which the selected alternative will affect public health or safety:*

By restoring the natural fire regime, firefighters, nearby landowners, and the public will not be exposed to the hazards associated with increased fire frequency, fire size, and fire intensity. No aspect of the project has been identified as having the potential to substantially and adversely affect public health or safety.

3) *Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, prime or unique farm lands, wetlands, wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.*

The project is not located near any resources that will be impacted by the Proposed Action. There is the potential for cultural sites within the project area but prior to implementation of any ground disturbing activities a survey will be completed to determine if the resources of concern are present. Design criteria, such as designating avoidance areas, will maintain their integrity and prevent adverse effects.

4) *The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.*

The effects of the Proposed Action on the human or natural environment were determined to be negligible. Based on our review of public comments and the project analysis, we do not find any highly controversial effects to the human environment.

5) *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.*

Similar projects conducted by Department of Interior agencies have exhibited the desired change in vegetation composition and structure. The analysis is based on our best use of available research and data. The level of risk associated with the implementation and results of this project are recognized and acceptable.

6) *The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or presents a decision in principle about a future consideration.*

There has been no indication that a precedent for future actions with significant effects will be established by implementation of the Proposed Action.

7) *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.*

All resource values were evaluated for cumulative impacts and determined that cumulative impacts will be negligible.

8) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.*

There is the potential for cultural sites within the project area but prior to implementation of any ground disturbing activities a survey will be completed to determine if the resources of concern are present. Design criteria, such as designating avoidance areas, will maintain their integrity and prevent adverse effects.

9) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under ESA of 1973.*

As described in the EA, no known threatened/ endangered species (plant or animal), or critical habitat has been identified in the project area considered in the EA.

10) *Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.*

As described in the EA, the Proposed Action does not violate any known Federal, State, or local law or requirement for protection of the environment. During implementation, all aspects of the operation will be managed in compliance with all state laws and the chemical label requirements; including all worker and environmental safety precautions for chemical storage, mixing, and loading. Officials from the Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe were consulted on this proposal.

DECISION

It is my decision to implement the Proposed Action, a 3,820 acre restoration project located north of Edwards Creek Valley and east of Shoshone Pass, in Churchill County, Nevada. The project is presented in detail in the Proposed Action of the Hoyt Restoration Project Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-NV-C010-2010-09-EA.

Rationale

This decision will interrupt the grass-fire cycle while there are still native plants and seeds in the area. This interruption should reduce cheatgrass establishment over a few growing seasons, allowing the native plants to successfully re-establish and persist in the burned area. The re-establishment of native vegetation will then restore habitat needed to support native wildlife and perpetuate natural ecosystem processes. The National Fire Plan, Review and Update of the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (January 2001) – states in part: Fire Management and Ecosystem Sustainability - The full range of fire management activities will be used to help achieve ecosystem sustainability, including its interrelated ecological, economic, and social components. The cycle of wildfire and annual weed invasion has disrupted proper ecosystem function, increased the size, intensity and frequency of wildfire, reduced plant and animal diversity, and set the stage for invasion by secondary perennial weeds that are even more difficult to control. These losses are accelerating and costly, not only in loss and endangerment of species and ecosystems, but also in risks to human life and property and in public and private expenditures associated with wildfires.

This project has been developed in collaboration with the Nevada Division of Wildlife, the Carson City District Fuels program, and the Stillwater Field Office Wildlife programs. Written communication including a description of the Proposed Action and a map was provided to the Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe on December 11, 2009. Consultation is ongoing.

BLM issued a press release soliciting public comment on the proposed project and posted an information sheet for the project on the Carson City District Office's web page on February 8, 2010. Comments or issue identification were requested by March 1, 2010. No comments were received for this project.

A scoping letter was sent to the grazing permittees, the land owner South of the project, and Magma Energy on February 5, 2010. The letter included a summary and maps of the proposed project. Comments were requested by March 1, 2010. No comments were received for this project.

The Hoyt Restoration Project Environmental Assessment was sent to the Nevada State Clearinghouse for proposal review on March 5, 2010. No comments or issues were received for this project.

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

The decision to implement the Proposed Action may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals by following the guidance and procedures found in the Code of Federal Regulations (43 CFR Part 4; Subparts A, B, and E) and on Form 1842-1.



Teresa J. Knutson
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Stillwater Field Office


Date